

An Approach of Environmental History to the "14th Century Crisis"

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This paper is an introduction to an approach of environmental history to the “14th Century Crisis.” The “14th Century Crisis” is the term for collective peril in the 14th century which is considered to be the time of transition from the Medieval Warm Period (ca. 1000–1300) to the Little Ice Age. The peril consists of cooling, natural disasters, epidemics and political upheaval such as the fall of the Mongol Empire (1206–1368). Our project embarks upon interdisciplinary collaboration between sciences (astronomy, meteorology, and seismology) and humanities (history and archival science) to elucidate an actual phase of the crisis. In the context of world history, the “14th Century Crisis” has attracted scholarly attention as the pivot that closed the multi-centered “13th Century System” across Afro-Eurasia, and paved the way for the European-centered “Modern World-System.” The grand shift, however, could not be calibrated properly without taking account of the environmental transition to the Little Ice Age. This is an introductory remark of our project aiming to shed some new light upon entangled relationships between human development and environment.

Keywords: 14th Century Crisis, Environmental History, Little Ice Age, Medieval Warm Period, History of Eurasia, Mongol Empire